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NEWS RELEASE

Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced that Jose R. Deguia, age 51, of Norfolk, Virginia and Albert Gomez Lasdulce, age 27, of Norfolk, Virginia, were convicted by a jury today of conspiracy to distribute 50 grams or more of crystal methamphetamine (also known as "ice") and 500 grams or more of methamphetamine (also known as "crank") and distribution and possession of methamphetamine. Jose Deguia was also convicted of possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime. Michael Ibanga, age 30, of Virginia Beach, Virginia, was convicted of conspiracy to commit money laundering. Deguia faces a mandatory minimum of 15 years in prison when sentenced on September 8, 2005, and Lasdulce faces a mandatory minimum of 10 years in prison when sentenced on September 9, 2005. Ibanga faces a potential sentence of 20 years in prison when sentenced. His sentencing date has not been set.

In January of 2005 a federal grand jury sitting in Norfolk, Virginia, returned a 46-count indictment charging the defendants with the narcotics, money laundering and firearm offenses. All three defendants have been credited with receiving multi-pound quantities of "ice" from sources in California who were bringing it across the border from Mexico. The defendants received shipments of "ice" primarily via paid courier services such as the United States Postal Service, United Parcel Service and FedEx. Two FedEx packages seized on May 25, 2004, totaled more than 500 grams of "ice." On rare occasions, the "ice" was body carried from source cities to the Tidewater, Virginia, area.

Deguia was also responsible for laundering money via various wire remitter services. Numerous wires, totaling nearly \$400,000, were sent from Virginia to California, New York, and Maryland. \$600,000 in U.S. currency was seized during the search of Deguia's house in Norfolk on May 28, 2004.

Mr. McNulty stated: "This prosecution is a big win in our struggle against the growing problem of methamphetamine in the Tidewater area. "Ice" has devastated communities across America and we must stop it before it gets a foothold in Virginia."

This case, dubbed as "Operation Ice Storm", was investigated by the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force and included DEA Norfolk, IRS, and the Norfolk and Virginia Beach Police Departments. Assistant United States Attorney Laura Everhart prosecuted the case.

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